

**Appropriations Committee  
Health Subcommittee  
February 24, 2022**

**Public Hearing on:  
House Bill 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023  
(DDS)**

Good evening, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Verdia Buie and I live in New Haven. I have been working for two human service organizations for people with Developmental Disabilities for my career. I work in a group home and support people with disabilities. I wish I could be testifying on Zoom today, but I am working and cannot take time away from my job to me, because I cannot secure coverage due to the staff shortages.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the state budget.

I receive my medical insurance through my job at Marrakech, Inc. Although the insurance is provided by the state and insurance companies almost every year for the 13 years I have been working there. I know that the state pays the best price however there have been many years that they were not provided with a Cost of Living Increase in Connecticut so they were not able to spend more on insurance for their employees. I have dialed into the hearing every year definitely causes concern for me.

I am thankful for the increases to my pay in the last year and in 2019, however the minimum wage for the agencies do not allow my employer flexibility to pay more for medication certification nor over time pay as before. When a new employee starts, they earn the same as I do even though I have been there for 13 years. **Increases as other companies are granted by the State of Connecticut.**

Our jobs are demanding and the people we support need us to survive. Now there are people who can work in easier jobs at the same or higher pay, and with future Cost of Living Increases. I am even more concerned due to the staffing crisis.

Please value the people we support with disabilities, and value my work and the work of the other staff at our nonprofit organizations. **There is no way to ignore the chronic underfunding of the existing services.**

**We urge the Appropriations Committee to fight for funding for these programs by implementing an increase.**

I provide essential and quality services for people in Connecticut, your family, friends and neighbors.

Thank you.

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